United Nations A/ES-10/433–S/2009/8

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
6 January 2009

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Identical letters dated 6 January 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

For the eleventh day now, Israel, the occupying Power, continues with impunity to unleash its military wrath on the defenceless population of the Gaza Strip. This is an illegal, immoral, and reprehensible massacre that the international community has thus far failed to stop and is a shame we must not tolerate or accept. The Israeli occupying forces have continued killing Palestinian civilians, annihilating entire families in the process. As being reported by several human rights organizations working on the ground, war crimes are being committed against Palestinian civilians.

As we write this letter, Palestinian paramedics struggle to access the Al-Dayeh four-story home, which Israeli artillery and fighter jets completely demolished. So far, at least 13 civilians, including newborns and toddlers, were among those recovered from under the rubble.

On Sunday, another massacre was committed, this time against the Al-Samoudi family in Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood east of Gaza City. Israeli occupying forces forced several families to gather in one unfinished house. Moments later, the survivors say, Israeli tanks pounded the house, where 70 people were inside, killing at least 13 civilians and critically injuring the remaining civilians. It took paramedics two days and great risk to their lives to reach the house and rescue those who did not die of their wounds.

Also in Gaza, Israeli artillery fire rained down on the Abu Eisha family in Gaza City's Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood on Monday evening, killing the entire family. Seven civilians, including four children, were killed in cold blood and became the latest family destroyed in Israel's war on Palestinian civilians. This family left behind 6-year-old Dalal, who was visiting relatives elsewhere in Gaza. The trauma and pain that this young girl will endure for the rest of her life is something the international community cannot ignore and it should not dodge its legal and moral responsibility towards these innocent civilians.

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Israel's crimes continue unabated, including the pursuit of civilians who have fled in panic and fear to seek refuge in United Nations schools after Israeli destruction of their homes and neighbourhoods. So far, Israeli artillery and missile fire have targeted four schools run by UNRWA, killing scores of civilians. Overnight on Monday, Israeli missiles killed three civilians in an UNRWA school in Al-Shati' refugee camp. Moreover, as of the writing of this letter, Israeli missiles had targeted Al-Fakhoura school in the Jabaliya refugee camp. Medical sources report that this military assault has killed at least 42 civilians thus far and wounded more than 40 others.

This ongoing Israeli aggression constitutes a war crime and crime against humanity. Israel, the occupying Power, is not only shirking, but is also gravely breaching, its responsibilities towards the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation and, in the process, is trampling the very principles and laws the international community claims to stand for and protect. International organizations confirm that more than 20 per cent of the approximately 600 Palestinian civilians killed are women and children. We warn that dozens of Palestinians remain under the rubble of Gaza homes and will likely not survive the ongoing military assaults. Further, we wish to draw your attention to the fact that international aid organizations, including UNRWA and the International Committee for the Red Cross, have declared that Israel is obstructing their efforts to assist the civilians in need, also in grave violation of international law.

We must not allow this massacre to continue. The international community must not allow Israel to continue committing such grave crimes with impunity. All must be held accountable for their actions and inactions with regard to what is happening in the Gaza Strip. History will not forgive those of us who stand by as this aggression continues. Our collective conscience and moral responsibility must compel us to act. The world is watching, in particular the suffering Palestinian people, and awaiting serious action to address this crisis, including by the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility to act for the maintenance of international peace and security, which is being gravely threatened by Israel's war against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 328 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 5 January 2009 (A/ES-10/432-S/2009/4), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter.)

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer